



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Former Air Force Airman Convicted of Second-Degree Murder Of Army Sergeant in Germany Sixth Conviction Stemming From 2005 Beating**

WASHINGTON - Rico Rodrigus Williams, 33, a former Air Force senior airman, was convicted today of second degree murder and witness tampering charges in connection with the death of Army Sergeant Juwan Johnson in Hohenecken, Germany, in 2005, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division, and Brigadier General Kevin J. Jacobsen, Commander of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI).

Following a 16-day trial in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, a jury convicted Williams of one count of second degree murder and one count of witness tampering. Williams was acquitted of a second count of witness tampering. The Honorable Judge Paul L. Friedman has not yet scheduled a sentencing date. The defendant faces up to life in prison.

According to the government's evidence, Williams was the leader of a gang, the Gangster Disciples sect, in Ramstein, Germany. On July 3, 2005, Williams and others gathered in the small town of Hohenecken near the Ramstein, Germany Air Base, and killed 25-year-old Juwan Johnson in a gang initiation ceremony.

Evidence presented at trial showed that the defendant and the others struck Johnson with their fists and kicked him. Johnson died the following day from blunt force trauma injuries, including hemorrhaging to the brain and heart.

According to evidence presented at trial, Williams later attempted to intimidate and made threats to another witness with the intent to hinder communication to law enforcement regarding Johnson's death.

Williams is the sixth person to be convicted of charges in the investigation into Johnson's death. Airman Nicholas Sims, Army Private Terrance Norman, and Army Sergeant Rodney Howell were convicted of involuntary manslaughter in military court proceedings. Airman

Jerome Jones was convicted in military court proceedings of conspiracy to commit assault, obstruction of justice, gang participation, and other charges. Army Specialist Bobby Morissette was convicted in military court proceedings of gang participation and other charges.

“Rico Williams led the Gangster Disciples in a savage gang-initiation ritual that led to the beating death of Army Sergeant Johnson,” U.S. Attorney Machen stated. “These guilty verdicts make him the sixth person to be convicted in connection with his brutal beating death. We hope this conviction brings some measure of justice for Sergeant Johnson and his family.”

“Today, a federal jury has held Rico Williams accountable for his role in the senseless and tragic death of Army Sergeant Johnson,” said Assistant Attorney General Breuer. “Gang-related violence shatters the lives of far too many Americans, including those abroad. The Justice Department is committed to ensuring that criminals who participate in such heinous acts are punished for their crimes.”

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Debra Long-Doyle of the District of Columbia and Trial Attorney Christine Duey of the Criminal Division’s Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section. The case was investigated by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Chesapeake Police Department.

In announcing the guilty verdict, U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant Attorney General Breuer, and Brigadier General Jacobsen praised the efforts of the lead investigators in the case: AFOSI Special Agents Zacheriah Gladle and Wilbur Thompson, and Special Agent Daniel Altman, formerly of AFOSI and now with United States Aid to Developing Nations. They also cited the efforts of Special Agent Nick Inge, who along with Altman arrested the defendant, and members of the Chesapeake Police Department SWAT and Vice & Narcotics teams, who assisted in the arrest.

They also acknowledged the work of United States Attorney’s Office employees Jeanette Litz, Paralegal Specialist; Dawn Tolson-Hightower, of the Victim Witness Assistance Unit; Criminal Investigator Duncan Templeton, and Intern Lauren Vermette. Finally, they expressed appreciation for the work of the prosecutors, Debra Long-Doyle and Christine Duey.